

DR. DeBAKEY:I would say my early childhood was largely influenced, you know, by the lifestyle of my father and mother and their devotion so to speak, and dedication to certain qualities and standards. They both had very high personal standards of life. They were both very generous and compassionate people. I think my mother displayed that a lot more strongly than my father, because he was a very strict disciplinarian.

SCHANCHE: When you say standards, what are you talking about?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I mean, standards in terms of, let's say, virtue, way of life, relation to your fellow man, integrity, basic honesty, they....

SCHANCHE: The traditional Christian values....

DR. DeBAKEY: Very much so. So much so that I would say my mother was quite a religious person, even though she did not seem to be in her discussions with people, and so on. In other words, she didn't make a great point of being a Catholic or a Protestant, or a Jew. But she did make a great point of living up to the, say the standards of the duty of Christian beliefs.

SCHANCHE: Was she a native Louisianian?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. My mother, neither my father nor my mother were natives of Louisiana. They both immigrated to this country when they were very young.

SCHANKE: I knew your father did. I didn't know that your mother did, too.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. My grandmother immigrated and settled in Oklahoma in the late 19th century. And my mother was brought over as a little, virtually as a baby. She grew up really in this country.

SCHANKE: Was she also from Lebanon?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes.

SCHANKE: She was?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, and of course, they were very strong Christians. As you know, the Christian people there are a sort of...in the minority in that area.

SCHANKE: Maronites.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, that's right. So was my father's family. My mother's family traditionally came from people who were in the church. My grandfather was actually a priest in the church. As you know, they marry. So, she had this background, you see, My father's family, were more....they were in business and

DR. DeBAKEY: professions. A big segment of the family is in the medical profession over there now. They are educated at the University of Beirut, the American university.

SCHANKE: Is that a tradition in your father's family?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, they went into either professional business and really were quite active and aggressive people who were very, very successful, and I'm sure that there runs in the family this drive. Well, there were some members of the family who weren't working, but anyhow, one of my uncles, for example, I didn't know him, but my father used to make.... I remember my father talking about him and sort of contemptuously, because he was an alcoholic. My father was a sort of teetotaller. He didn't smoke or drink and he was very strict about it. He didn't have much patience with people who did. My mother was much more tolerant about those things, and she used to sort of get after him sometimes by making remarks about people who, you know, would smoke or take a drink, and he thought that was a bad quality in them, and she'd say, "Well, you know, they're nice people, and if they want to smoke or drink, and don't

DR. DeBAKEY: harm anybody, then why can't they. Why do you criticize them for that?" You see, she was very liberal-minded person, very generous in her....very compassionate, very considerate. My father used to criticize her for being so generous in helping poor people, that he thought weren't worth a damn. You know, he'd say "Why do you want to help them? They aren't worth a damn. Lazy as hell, won't go to work." And she'd, you know, sometimes these were Negroes, we had a large Negro community in Lake Charles, and they liked my mother and would often take advantage of her, although she was willing to be taken advantage of. She'd give them food and help them, give them old clothes, and things like that. It wasn't that my father objected to giving, because he was a very generous man, too, but he objected to her giving to people who weren't worth a damn. Because in his mind, you know, lazy and no good, as he put it. Well, this was because, of course, he applied these standards to others that he lived by. Everybody didn't have that drive that he had to work hard. But you can understand us growing up in that atmosphere, going to school and we were expected to do well.

SCHANCHE: Did you ever wonder about the source of his drive? I gather that he was very much like you.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, well, I know the source of it. I think this drive is a genetic quality, it's inherited. For example, he had seven brothers and none of them had the drive he had, with possibly the exception of one, who was also very successful in business, the youngest brother. But all the others, my father thought weren't worth a damn. You know, they were his brothers and yet, and he helped them; he gave them money, he tried to, you know, he gave them money to go into business, and they never did well. He was always generous with them, but he didn't have anything... but, he didn't think much of them. They were his brothers and he would be glad to do anything he could for them, and he did help them, with lots of money, but they didn't do much with it. So you see, it's interesting, there you are, one out of seven who had real drive and the others didn't, except for one possibly.

SCHANCHE: Speaking of the genetic factor, the family originally, is it French, or is it originally Lebanese name, a French name, or do you know?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I think there's some French in the background. It's hard to say exactly when this occurred, because, you know, it's an old family, it goes way back and they have been Christians for centuries and this is difficult to go back much further. One of my cousins, who is a doctor in Beirut, tried to go back and extend the family tree a little bit, and he's told me a little about the family, but I never was greatly interested in it, you know, to the point...it seems to me that wasn't very important. You know, we were here, and you have such difficulty in assessing the qualities of your family tree, so I never was greatly concerned or interested in it, so I really don't know. Well, we were expected to do well in school, and I think all of us did well. Virtually, each one of the children led his class and we were highly respected in the community, had good friends, although my father was not a joiner, you know, he didn't believe in joining a lot of clubs and things of that sort. He wanted to keep his independence.

SCHANKE: He didn't have to join as a local business man?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. Well, there wasn't, for example, he didn't have to join, he was asked, for example, to join the Masons, he was asked to join a number of things, and I remember when I went to college, for example, he cautioned me about joining fraternities he said, "Now, you do what you want to do," but, he said, "You know, I've always lived by the principle that you do what's right and you don't need to compromise your own independence in what's right by joining all kinds of organizations and clubs." He felt that very strongly. I never did thoroughly understand why, but he had a lot of very good friends, very close friends, for example, one of the judges there, a highly respected judge, who was perhaps one of his closest friends. He had friends in all walks of life. The principal of the school was a very close friend of his; the sheriff was a very close friend, and many other business people. Leading business people there were good friends of his. So he had good friendship on a respected basis, but he never got really close in an intimate way with anybody. This was largely because he wanted to maintain his independence and his privacy and stick to his business,

DR. DeBAKEY: he felt these things interfered with what he wanted to do.

SCHANKE: He was an independent man, but he was not a loner in the sense of....

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, no, no. He was very social, you know, he was gregarious and social and he was great fun; people liked him, and they invited him to all kinds of things and he'd occasionally go hunting with them, or fishing with them, or things of that sort.

SCHANKE: Was he an outdoors type?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, oh, yes, he loved the outdoors. As a boy, he used to take me fishing and hunting with him. He'd take the whole family, he was a great family man. Every Sunday, for example, we used to go, the whole family, we'd go out, and I can remember as a very young boy, five or six years of age, going in the buggy, and I think we got our first automobile when I was about ten or eleven years of age. We got one of the first automobiles. This goes back now..... He was a very, very active minded in new things. Innovations. Just to illustrate, you've got to remember going back now as far as fifty, sixty years.

DR. DeBAKEY: Lots of communities in that area didn't have electricity, and I can remember, we had gas in the house and gas lights and we used to light them up, you know. He, because he wanted to get his house electrically wired and his business electrically wired, he bought a generator, and we had one of the first homes with electricity.

SCHANKE: Had his own power plant.

DR. DeBAKEY: Set up his own little, yes, we had a generator. And I can remember as a little boy going to help him put gas in it, or kerosene or whatever it was.

SCHANKE: You didn't have a public power system?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, no. Then, later, we did, and of course, we used the public power system. He was always attentive to matters that related to advancing or using the latest technology and that sort of thing. He was always reading about it, and learning more about it. A great reader.

SCHANKE: What drew him into pharmacy?

DR. DeBAKEY: Business, he was in, first in the retail business, he had all kinds of business and real estate, and pharmacy was... he had two drug stores.

SCHANKE: He learned pharmacy after he got into the business, rather

SCHANCHE: than....he didn't go to a college?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, no. Then we, as I say, we were all expected to do well in school, and there wasn't a great deal of, let's say, applause in doing well, there wasn't a great to do made about our reports, if we came back with a straight 'A' report. But if we got a poor grade, then we heard about it. That was the attitude. So in a sense, you see, we were very early set with the idea that we had to live up to our high standards and this went in everything, you know, our personal hygiene, for example, if there was anything dirty on us, he would make a great point of it and reprimand us. "Look at your fingernails, look at your hair." We couldn't come to the table unless we were scrubbed clean. And my mother would...same way. He would, in the summer time, there wasn't air conditioning in those days, he'd change clothes three and four times a day to stay fresh. And my mother.....

SCHANCHE: Were you expected to do this, too?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, of course, we would be at school and when we came back, yes. We had to bathe and put on clean clothes right away. We had chores, lots of chores. One of his

DR. DeBAKEY: hobbies was gardening and we had to work in the garden and he taught us himself and he was a great gardner. You know, he died in the garden, working in his garden. My brother resented having to do all these chores, particularly working in the garden, he'd often say to me, "When I grow up, I'm never gonna work in the garden." Well, I got to like it, and I like gardening. I loved to work in the garden. I won any number of prizes, you know, in the community like that, you'd have tri-county, we were tri-parish, prizes were given for gardening and it's kind of gone out of fashion today, but in those days, people had gardens, vegetable gardens as well as flower gardens. We had both. We had a big yard. I won first prize repeatedly, because it was perfected.

SCHANKE: Was it considered a reasonable masculine avocation.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, in those days. Yeah, Yes, I was very engaged in a lot of things as a boy, in community things, boy scouts for example. I was an active member of one of the boy scout troops. It happened to be sponsored by the Baptists, even though I was an Episcopalian. The reason I joined that group was because most of the boys in the

DR. DeBAKEY: neighborhood belonged to that boy scout troop and, secondly, the scout master lived next door to me. He was a great friend of my fathers. He was in the insurance business.

SCHANCHE: How high did you go as a scout?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I got a few merit badges, I was working on my Eagle Scout, my father was one of the examiners for certain of the badges and he was interested in it and supported it. Then I played in the band....

SCHANCHE: What did you play?

DR. DeBAKEY: Played the saxophone.

SCHANCHE: Do you still play it?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, no, I had to give it up. I don't play anymore. Oh, I first took lessons on the violin, and played the violin for a while, but I couldn't play in the band with the violin. I wanted to play in the band, and I wanted to be with the boys. I got my father to buy me a saxophone and I could read music, and you know, to play it on the piano, and the violin, you know, not well, but I could play. And I said, if you'll just buy me the saxophone, I'll learn to play it. He said, "Will you give

DR. DeBAKEY: up the...he wanted to..... I said, "I'll continue to take violin lessons," which I did. But I learned to finger the saxophone, it was easy to do. I just had to practice fingering, I could read music. So I went out for the band, made it, and played with the band. I played in the band at Tulane when I went to Tulane, and played in the marching band and the concert....we had a concert orchestra, a very good one. I played in both of them. So, you see, I was very active, I was not just a studious person, but very active. I played sports, I played on the baseball team. In fact, I've played catcher. I played the position of catcher on the baseball team in high school and then when I went to....

SCHANKE: Was this the high school baseball team?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, and then I went out for foot ball, but I was small for football, and, oh, I played on the scrub team, they called it. Went out for track, ran the 100 yard dash. When I was at Tulane, I played on basketball team and I played on the handball team.

SCHANKE: This was in the days when you didn't have to be six and a half feet tall to play basketball?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, you know, all you had to do was be very aggressive and I played guard. I was aggressive, very, and pretty good at guard. I used to get perhaps more fouls than anyone else, too. I played and I enjoyed it. So, you see, I grew up with a very enjoyable boyhood, involved in community work, in community activities of various kinds. A wide variety of them. I never sensed any of the prejudice that is supposed to occur in the South particularly to anyone who is not an Anglo Saxon. I never felt that at all, because I was with these people, associated with them, and played with them, worked with them, and of course, in school I stood out; all my teachers were very respectful of what we.....of the DeBakey children because they had them coming in a line and they all were... did well in school, and led their class, each one of them as they came. I was the oldest.

SCHANCHE: What was the order of birth? You were first.

DR. DeBAKEY: I was first and my brother was second.

SCHANCHE: In what year?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I was born in 1908.

SCHANCHE: And he was born.....

DR. DeBAKEY: In 1910. About two years between us. The girls were a little younger. Then you see, we never missed anything, my father was sufficiently successful that he could take good care of us. We had everything we needed. Large, very comfortable home and at that time in Lake Charles, the best residential area.

SCHANKE: Describe the home. You must have had a very feeling.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, well, we had a very large old fashioned type of frame house.

SCHANKE: Victorian?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, sort of Victorian. There was a big wide porch all the way around the house. Wrapped around with a swing on each side. On the side and the front. A large lawn in front of it, it was really a three story house, two stories, and a big attic, and there were a total of, let's see, upstairs, I think a total of six bedrooms, upstairs. I even had my own bedroom. I remember I was the envy of a lot of the boys around because I had a...an electric fan on the ceiling.

SCHANKE: One of those big circulating fans?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes. With three speeds and I'd sleep all night on low speed in the summer time.

SCHANCHE: Did you have indoor plumbing?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. We had three bathrooms.

SCHANCHE: At that time.....it still had not.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I know that, but my father was very advanced in this regard....he wanted the latest of everything and we had indoor plumbing and there were many homes in the neighborhood who still had outhouses. But as soon as it became possible to put indoor plumbing in the whole neighborhood, he did it. This was the best neighborhood in Lake Charles, so it was one of the first to get the pipes laid down. And so from my earliest childhood, I don't remember outdoor.

SCHANCHE: What's your earliest memories?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, my earliest memories are when I was about four, five, something in that neighborhood. I can remember when I first went to grammar school, my father and mother took me to school.

SCHANCHE: Were you reluctant?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, not particularly. I never was afraid of much of

DR. DeBAKEY: anything as a child, I was always curious. I think my curiosity overcame my fear. I can still remember before going to grammar school and I couldn't have been much more than four or five. Sitting in front of my mother while she was sewing. She was a great sewing....this was one of her greatest sort of avocations and she taught a little sewing. I'd sit there and watch her try to...and ask her, you know, I was always asking questions, and bothering her, but she was very patient with me. Largely, I think, to sort of let her do what she was doing, she'd show me, for example, she'd get me a crochet needle and show me how to crochet. I caught on very quickly and I was crocheting. I remember one time I saw her using a tatting bobbin, you see, and most girls today don't even know what tatting is. They've never seen a bobbin. She showed me how to tatt. I loved to do things with my hands and work. Then when.....

SCHANKE: That beginning...actually when you were about five years old...

DR. DeBAKEY: It must have been. Before I went to medical...before I went to grammar school, and I continued this, I loved to sew. And she'd be on the sewing machine, later on she

DR. DeBAKEY: how to use the sewing machine and I'd sew for her. She'd show me what to do and I'd sew it. I learned to sew a straight line, I was fascinated with that. She showed me how to sew with a needle and thread and how to cut patterns later on. I 'd see her cutting a pattern, making a shirt, and later she showed me how to do this, and I would make some shirts for myself and make some underwear.

SCHANKE: You did that for yourself?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah! Cut the pattern.....

SCHANKE: At what age were you doing this?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I must have been only eight or nine, maybe ten years of age.

SCHANKE: Were they pretty good shirts?

DR. DeBAKEY: YEAH! Oh, yes, sure. I did all of these things. She taught me how to do them.

SCHANKE: Did she teach you different kinds of stitches, like the baseball stitch?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. She showed me all the stitches. Definitely. Basting stitch, continue stitch, and how to sew the stitch you use for button hole and how to sew buttons on.

DR. DeBAKEY: She showed me all these things.

SCHANKE: Do you remember....what I'm trying to do here is create an actual scene, do you remember a particular incident when your mother was teaching you, some element of sewing; and what she said to you and how she encouraged your curiosity, and.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I think it, as I recall, and look back at it, I think it was mostly because she enjoyed doing what she was doing and she saw I was interested in it. She didn't deliberately try to encourage me in this. She saw my interest in it. I would sit there and ask questions and sort of bother her, really. But instead of being bothered, she liked the fact that I was interested in it and so she tried to show me how to do this, and in a sense that would relieve her for a while to do her work while I was piddling around with what she showed me to do. I was trying to learn how to crochet, well, I was fooling with it, while I was doing that I couldn't be talking to her and bothering her. But she later saw that I was catching on and so she encouraged me in that sense.

SCHANCHE: Was this a kind of general attitude on her part and your fathers, that when you did express curiosity, they encouraged it rather than blundered it by....

DR.DeBAKEY: Oh, always. Always. They never blundered anything. They encouraged us to be curious and to learn more and to read more and to interest ourselves. When I, for example, wanted this saxophone, you see, the only concern my father had was whether I was going to quit taking violin lessons. They had a great interest in us, this was their life in a way---the children were their first concern. They kept close watch on us and tried to help us in every possible way.

SCHANCHE: You mean in a loving sense rather than a supervisory or omnipresent way....

DR.DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, I would say, my father and mother loved us very dearly and you sense this as a child. We, all of us, had the same feeling and this was what kept our family closely together and still, for example, I still call my brother, even though he's away, I call him at least once a week and chat with him on the phone. I was talking with him this morning. Very close feeling

DR. DeBAKEY: among the children and this was largely because of the way my father and mother brought us together. Didn't force us to come together, but the thing that binds you is, I think, love for each other. We did a lot of things together, as I said, for example, he would take us all out every Sunday, every Sunday morning, we'd all go out and picnic or we'd go crabbing and have a fire and bring a pot and boil the crabs and eat out there and then come back Sunday evening. It was very easy to do, you just had to go out about ten or fifteen miles in those days. Many open camp sites on the banks of the river or the lake. Preon Lake, for example, which opens up into the Gulf. It's in western Louisiana, and there's lots of game, lot of fish, lot of crabs and we'd bring a certain amount home and we'd have a picnic together out there and boil them, bring bread out, and it was really a lot of fun to be out and Dad encouraged us to do things, he didn't.....us in any way. When I wanted a .22 rifle, I think I was only about ten or eleven years of age, well, I got one, but my brother wanted one, so he got one for my brother. Taught us how to use it. Taught us to be

DR.DeBAKEY: careful, how to handle it, what to do, things of that sort.
You know, he didn't say, "No you can't have one!" He
said, well, if you'll learn how to use it I'll get you one.
I said, yes. And we responded to this too.

SCHANCHE: What did you do with it?

DR.DeBAKEY: We went hunting. My brother and I used to go hunting
even before we went to school, high school, we'd go
early in the morning. You see, you could go out just
ten or fifteen miles from our home and hunt ducks in
duck season.

SCHANCHE: With a .22 rifle?

DR.DeBAKEY: Yeah, we hunted with a .22 rifle.

SCHANCHE: Shooting ducks on the wing?

DR.DeBAKEY: Yeah, yeah.

SCHANCHE: You must have gotten pretty good.

DR.DeBAKEY: We were pretty good, oh yes. We were very good with it.
It was fun. We missed a great many, of course, but when
you hit one, you know, it was great fun. Then, later he
got us a shotgun and we would go hunting with him. We
went hunting together very often. Sunday afternoon in the

DR. DeBAKEY: winter time we'd go out into the prairie and in the country and we'd hunt birds and squirrels, we just walked and on Sunday afternoon went into fields.....

SCHANKE: This wasn't all of your family. Just you and your father and brother?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. So I have nothing but very happy memories of my childhood and memories of greater learning to grow up . When I was about twelve or something like that, my father decided to make a trip abroad and take his automobile and we were gone a whole year.

SCHANKE: That's a very ambitious thing to do.

DR. DeBAKEY: He took the whole family.

SCHANKE: Where did you go?

DR. DeBAKEY: We went to France, traveled around all over France. Then we went.....

SCHANKE: What kind of car was this, do you remember?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, it was a Cole Eight.

SCHANKE: Cole Eight?

DR. DeBAKEY: It's no longer being made, of course. But it was a big car, and eight cylinder.

SCHANKE: Right at the end of World War I?

DR. DeBAKEY: It was about 1920....about 1920, 21.

SCHANKE: Shortly after the War.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, about 1921. I wrote a diary.

SCHANKE: Do you still have it?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, and I wrote columns for the local newspaper.

SCHANKE: You told me that once.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, and they published it. I'd send them a little column every once in a while, kind of in the form of a letter, of what I'd seen, and what I'd experienced and they published it.

SCHANKE: Do you have this material around somewhere? I'd like to see it.

DR. DeBAKEY: I will....I'll get it out. Again, on this trip, I was a very, very curious person and I kind of got into all kinds of things. And really had a....I can remember this very well, I recall the experiences I had.

SCHANKE: Well, this is almost the classic old fashioned grand tour.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, that's right. We were gone a whole year, I was out of school a year. I really made it up, because I skipped a year in school. One of my classes had two grades in it. In those days the classes were small and one teacher would teach two grades. She'd teach one group

DR. DeBAKEY: of students in one grade and then she'd shift over to the other part of the room and teach the other group of students. It would be ten, fifteen, twenty students in a grade.

SCHANKE: Was Lake Charles a one school town at that time?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, no. We had high school, and we had about three or four grammar schools. There was one central grammar school, that was a big one, but there was one, I think, one or two, maybe three other smaller grammar schools. But I went to the big one, central, because we lived near it.

SCHANKE: Is this counting all the schools, or just the white schools?

DR. DeBAKEY; No, just the white.

SCHANKE: Because then there were also some Negro....

DR. DeBAKEY: Negro schools, that's right. Yeah, this was just the white. The paper encouraged me to send more of them.

SCHANKE: What was the paper called?

DR. DeBAKEY: American Press. Lake Charles American Press.

You can go back in the files there and get them all from that period. They were around 1920, 21, 22. As I say, when I was in.....I made up this year because I skipped a year. In one of the classes this teacher noticed that I was not studying during the study period, I was watching

DR. DeBAKEY: her and curious about what she was teaching the students in the grade ahead of me. And she finally called me in, she finally called me after class, and she said, 'I noticed that you are not studying and yet you know everything when I examine you, and you're following this other class.' She said, 'Would you be interested in taking a test for this other grade?' And I said, "Yes, certainly I would." So she gave me the test, and I made a 100 on it. And she promoted me.

SCHANKE: That was at what grade, about 4th, 5th?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, it was higher than that. It must have been about the 6th or 7th. Because it was shortly before we went on this trip.

SCHANKE: Wasn't this grand tour a rather difficult thing for your mother, because your sisters must have been quite small.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, one of them was virtually a babe in arms. The youngest one, it was. But mother was a very uncomplaining person. She rarely ever complained about anything. She was thankful for everything. She was thankful that we were healthy and enjoying ourselves and she adjusted to situations very well.

SCHANKE: Did they take a servant along?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, we did have some servants in some of the places where we stayed long, but we didn't have any servants with us.

SCHANKE: Were you influenced in a powerful way by this experience?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I think, it no doubt had a great influence on me because really I saw so many new things and new people and different people and I think this may have made me, or may have influenced my attitude towards traveling and going to different places. I enjoy that tremendously.

SCHANKE: What did it do, did it heighten your perception?

DR. DeBAKEY: Very definitely. It expanded my whole understanding, too. I met all kinds of different people, and people who spoke different languages and dressed differently and behaved differently. Even, we stayed in some places long enough to get to know some of these people. I wrote about them,

SCHANKE: Did you stay in hotels?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes. And sort of , and then we rented a house and that sort of thing. We had a very enjoyable tour.

SCHANCHE: You made the European grand tour, did you also go to the Middle East?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. We went to Egypt, Italy and Beirut, Lebanon. Damascus, you know, we traveled about a great deal and of course, we had the car with us so we could make trips. Very often these trips we made just with my father and me or with my father and mother and me. The other children were too young to go along. Sometimes my brother would come along, but he was still too young, he didn't get much out of it.

SCHANCHE: Did you have any period....any moments during that trip where you sort of, did you think over dreams and said 'Eureka' or were there any....you know.....

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I was just wide eyed. You get some sense of my reactions by what I wrote.

SCHANCHE: I'd like to see that.

DR. DeBAKEY: I'll try to get that....no, I think that I was just more interested in the people I met than in the sites I saw.

SCHANCHE: You were already bilingual then, weren't you? You spoke French from childhood.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, while I was in the Middle East I began to learn Arabic.

SCHANKE: Did you?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, my father was so impressed with what I was doing that he wanted me to take lessons when I got back, but unfortunately I lost interest in it. You know, as a child, unless someone forces you to do that sort of thing....

SCHANKE: It was pretty hard to study Arabic in Lake Charles, Louisiana, wasn't it?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, it....the thing is though, that he wanted me to take some lessons, correspondence lessons, which you could get. I started it and learned the alphabet and things, a few things like that, but I kind of lost interest because it didn't seem useful to me. And I was interested in so many other things. I wish I hadn't though, you see, that shows you the immaturity of a child. I wish I hadn't. It would be a wonderful thing to be able to read and write Arabic now. Those are some of my memories of my early childhood.

SCHANKE: When did you first begin working at your father's drugstore?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, as a child.

SCHANCHE: At what age?

DR. DeBAKEY: One of my earliest recollections was a very traumatic experience. I, oh, I was....I must have been no more than ten or eleven. I'd sweep and clean up. I had that to do in the morning and I had to do it in the afternoon, and one morning, for example, I went in to one of the drugstores and the druggist was a bachelor, a man by the name of Conrad, I'll never forget him, because he was very kind to me and I got to like him.

SCHANCHE: Conrad?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. But he was an alcoholic. My father wanted time and time again to get rid of him, because he was an alcoholic. He couldn't tolerate it, you know. He was such a kind man, my mother persuaded him, and said, ' You can't do that to him, he has nowhere to go. And as long as he does this on a weekend, on a Sunday or something like that and tends to his business during the week, leave him alone.' But he'd get drunk, you know, on the weekend and he had a place to stay in the back of the drugstore. And this morning he let me in, as he usually did, early

DR. DeBAKEY: in the morning, before I was getting ready to go to high school, I mean, to grammar school and I started sweeping the front and cleaning up, doing my usual chores, when I heard this shot in the back. It startled me, sort of scared me. I ran to the back of the drug store and he wasn't behind the counter, so I went to the back where he lived, where he stayed, in his room and there he was, sprawled on the bed. He had shot himself in the temple and his hand was out like that, he was sprawled and the blood was coming out of his head, his hand out like that with the gun on the floor.

SCHANKE: A pistol?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, a pistol. So you can imagine, you know, here was a boy who runs in there and sees a guy who has committed suicide.

SCHANKE: He was already dead?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, he was dead, yeah. I started crying and got upset. And I got on the phone and called my father and he came out and he called the sheriff and the police came out. But it was a traumatic experience.

SCHANKE: An enormously shocking thing to see.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, it was. You see, I liked him very much. I was fond of him because he was so kind to me and so nice to me. He used to kid with me and show me things when I asked, you know, how to do this or how to make that. He showed me how to make soda water. You know, from ingredients, this was a chemical ingredients. He showed me how to do things like that. Showed me how to read a prescription and to do it, how to carry it out and I used to help him in the back, make tablets and powders, and things of that sort.

SCHANCHE: What types of things did you make?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, prescriptions that doctors would write, you know, in those days you didn't have as much over the counter as drugs.

SCHANCHE: About 90% of them were made up by the....

DR. DeBAKEY: Made up by the pharmacist. That's right, he.....

SCHANCHE: Were they still using b----- and things like that at that time?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, callmo powder. They put together various things, the doctor prescribed them. Usually there were three or four ingredients in a prescription, and you put them together

DR. DeBAKEY: either in powder form or sometimes in tablet form.

We had a tablet maker.

SCHANKE: You were filling prescriptions, then, when you were twelve years old?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, when I....you see, he taught me how to read prescriptions, and fill them and do them and you see, when I went to medical school, when I was in medical school, during one of the years I was in medical school, I got a job in the hospital as a night pharmacist. Doing emergency pharmacy work, even though I wasn't registered pharmacist, I knew how to do it and they found out I knew how to do it and they wanted to let me have the job, I wanted the job. So, I stayed in the hospital and worked as an emergency pharmacist.

SCHANKE: Was he....he obviously was a very unhappy man, or he wouldn't have committed suicide. Did you ever find out....

DR. DeBAKEY: He was not married. He was a bachelor, this druggist.

SCHANKE: Was he a manic-depressive or something?

DR. DeBAKEY: Of course, I don't know, you see, I was just a child, and I can't assess his personality other than to know that he was a very likable person, and many alcoholics are, as

DR. DeBAKEY: you know. I was very fond of him, and he liked me.

SCHANKE: Was this your first acquaintance with sudden death?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, very definitely.

SCHANKE: Had you ever even seen a dead person before?

DR. DeBAKEY: I don't recall, no. Prior to that time. I don't think anyone had died in my presence or that I recalled going to see dead, you know, a funeral, I don't remember that.

SCHANKE: When did you begin to focus on medicine?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I think this gradually developed from my early experience in my father's association with doctors and being in the pharmacy. Getting to know a lot of the doctors. They were people I liked and, you know, several of them I admired very much.

SCHANKE: How many doctors were there in Lake Charles?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I guess there must have been at that time, it's hard to say, maybe fifteen, sixteen.

SCHANKE: Were any of them specialists? Or were they all general practitioners?

DR. DeBAKEY: General practitioners.

SCHANKE: There were very few specialists in those days.

DR. DeBAKEY: That's right, yeah, they were all general practitioners. But some of them did more surgery than, you know, they were surgically inclined. And some of my boyhood friends were doctors sons, you know, and I got to know them well, too.

SCHANKE: Did you ever, as a boy, get involved with a physician, by helping him in his office or this sort of thing?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, but I was interested, I think, in the medical work because of my relationship with doctors and so on. And secondly, biology interested me greatly, even in high school. My father tells, used to tell the story, about my going hunting with him one day, when I must have been no more than five or six years of age, maybe younger. He took me out in the buggy, that's before we had an automobile, in the horse and buggy, and he had shot some birds, we went bird hunting and he had put me near the buggy where, he sort of made a little camp, and he told me to stay there while he went walking out in the prairie to shoot some birds and then he was coming back. Then he left some birds that he'd shot and then he came back again, and I was sitting there and he noticed

DR. DeBAKEY: some blood, and he noticed a little blood on my hand that I was trying to hide, and he thought I had cut myself, there was a knife nearby. He noticed some blood on the knife, it looked like it had been wiped off, but not completely clean. Finally he looked at me, made me open my hands, and finally he said, "What did you do? Did you cut yourself?" And started cleaning my hands, he could see I wasn't cut. Finally he made me confess that I had cut open one of the birds, and he saw where I had cut it open, you see, they hadn't been cleaned or anything. He said, "Well, why did you do this, what were you trying to do?" And I said, "I was trying to find out how they fly." And I had cut them open.

SCHANKE: Dissected one of....were they quail?

DR. DeBAKEY: Dissected one of them, trying to find out how this quail could fly. But, I think it mostly reflects the early sense of curiosity I had and interest in biology. I was always interested in biology.

SCHANKE: When did you take biology in high school? As a sophomore?

DR. DeBAKEY: I think we had it as a junior.

SCHANKE: Junior?

DR. DeBAKEY: I think so, it may have been as a sophomore.

SCHANKE: Was it sort of standard high school biology, where you dissected one frog?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, that's right. But I was so curious that I did more than what they told me to do and I'd go out and used to try to catch animals and then dissect them myself, you see. Then when I was in college....

SCHANKE: What kind of animals? Rabbits?

DR. DeBAKEY: Rabbits, yes. And squirrels, we used to make traps for them, you know, and there were lots of squirrels around, plenty in our yard. Birds, frogs, snakes, lots of snakes around, non-poisonous, there were plenty of them. When I was in college, the biology professor took a shine to me and he saw I was greatly interested. he made me an instructor, I was a student instructor. I did a lot of the preparatory work for the class. For example, in cat anatomy, I did all of the preparation in taking the cats, when they were brought in and embalming them and getting them ready for dissection and dissecting some of them for his use to demonstrate and things of

DR. DeBAKEY: that sort. I loved to dissect nicely and, you know, he tried to keep me in biology.

SCHANKE: So you had gone quite beyond high school biology by the time you finished high school biology, since you were studying anatomy.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, because of my own curiosity, I got the books and read, tried to learn more on my own.... My teacher gave me references, I'd go to the library and get them out. I loved to read, one of the things that I....I loved to get things from the library and read about things and my parents gave us a lot of reading material, you know, they bought the encyclopedia britannica and a number of things of that sort for us. We had them available and I was one of the great users of the library at home in Lake Charles. I was constantly going by the library from school to pick up four, five or six books, and I would bring them back the next day. One of the problems my parents had was to make me go to bed, to go to sleep. I wanted to stay up reading, you see, yet I had to get up early, they knew I was going to get up early.

SCHANCHE: Were you reading novels or were you more....

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I was more interested in, you know, I read some novels, some of the things boys read, you know, The Rover Boys and things like that, but I didn't get a great thrill out of reading those things.

SCHANCHE: You read for information rather than for.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, I was curious. I had this great sense of curiosity. I wanted to learn more about the world about me. So that's what fascinated me more than anything else. Then, too, I read in English, I was interested in English, and my teachers gave me some things to read and I loved to read great literature. I learned a great deal from this...

SCHANCHE: Eighteenth century classics?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, I spent, I remember I had gotten, I remember going to the library one time to get special little book that somebody had written about Gray's Elegy. And I remember going to the library to get it and I was fascinated with this poem.

SCHANCHE: Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard?

DR. DeBAKEY: In a Country Church Yard, yes....here I was, just, I was

DR. DeBAKEY: in high school.

SCHANKE: Far from the mading crowd.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah.

SCHANKE: Do you still remember it?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I think it is one of the most beautiful poems, even

today, every once in a while I'll get it out and read it.

It is so beautifully written. The reason the teacher wanted me to get this special, I guess it was edition, I don't know, but the reason she wanted me to get it, I remember very well, was because she wanted to point out to me, that he hard work that went into putting it in this form, it was so beautifully written, and the....well, not only in cadence, but in terms of the words, and, of course, the real basic philosophy of it is about life. But she wanted me to understand that this came about not from the great talent of this man as much as his sort of talent for working on it, to perfect it. And so she wanted me to get this especially to show me the numerous places he'd scratched out words and put new....a new word, you see. And it was really a very instructive lesson, because I, you know, when you

DR. DeBAKEY: read this thing, it's really a beautiful poem, I think one of the most beautiful in English literature.

SCHANKE: I think so too, it evokes the great loss of talent in the life of Jesus.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, well, you see it really is a beautiful, beautifully expressed concept of life. It's very transient nature, you know, we are here really for a very short period of time and what do you do really to the whole thing, and that some make a contribution, others may or may not make a contribution, it's a very, I think, thoughtful, but it's so beautifully stated, I mean, the wording and the way it's stated, it's just such a beautiful poem.

SCHANKE: Ironically, I used Gray's Elegy to begin the first chapter of the last book I wrote.

DR. DeBAKEY: Really?

SCHANKE: It powerfully impressed me when I was in high school....

DR. DeBAKEY: Well that, you see, I still remembered it. It made a great impression upon me, and I was fascinated with English literature and my teacher saw me interested and encouraged me to read things. They gave me references, in those days there wasn't a reference list very often for

DR. DeBAKEY: the student. But I was lucky with my teachers. Most of the teachers in Lake Charles were from well-established families there, these were the girls who had gone to college and had come back home.

SCHANKE: Had they gone to colleges or normal schools?

DR. DeBAKEY: Some had gone to normal schools, but others had actually gone to LSU at Tulane. They came from pretty good families. They came from good families and frequently well-to-do families. If a girl didn't get married, there wasn't much else she could do except go into nursing or teaching and very often these girls didn't get married or were late getting married, or didn't have anything to do when they got out of college, so they'd come back home and teaching was an open thing for them. They were good girls, good people and they were interested in the students. Certainly very interested in me. Everyone of my teachers, I remember one time, for example, I thought I made one of my teachers quite mad at me, because I caught her in a mistake, which was in math, and she had explained the problem to us on the board and being sort of aggressive and picking it up very quickly, I couldn't wait to tell her

DR. DeBAKEY: that it was a mistake. She was startled when I raised my hand to point out that there was a mistake in what she put on the board, in the calculation she had made. She said, "All right, smarty, show me what the mistake is. Come up here." So I had to come up before the whole class and show her where she had made a mistake, and she admitted that it was a mistake.

SCHANKE: Weren't you a little embarrassed when she said 'all right, smarty, come up here?'

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I really, I didn't feel embarrassed then, I felt embarrassed later, because I realized that wasn't the way to do it. I thought she was going to get made at me because I admired her, I liked her and I liked math very much. It came to me very easily. She was very nice about it, and that made me feel even worse. So later, I apologized to her and I wanted to see her and apologize to her and she said, 'no, you don't need to apologize, I'm glad you picked it up, and she said 'I've since pointed out to some of my teachers that you did pick this thing up. And she said, I'm proud

DR. DeBAKEY: of you. She made me feel even....about it. It's
interesting, later on, I took care of her, she got sick.

SCHANCHE: Oh, really?

DR. DeBAKEY: She came over here, and I saw her and took care of her.
She was very nice.

SCHANCHE: What did she have?

DR. DeBAKEY: She had a swelling in her leg, which really was a post-
phlebitic type of syndrome. I've had some beautiful
letters from her. She just died last year. She retired
from teaching....but she was very, very nice to me.

SCHANCHE: When you went to Tulane, why did you go to Tulane?
Just because you were a Louisiana boy and that was the
place to go? Or did you have some definite plan....

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I wanted to go to medical school, and Tulane had
a medical school.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

DR. DeBAKEY: And, too, some of my teachers sort of advised me to go there, you know, they said you want to go to the best school. They talked about my going, you know, to some school in the North, but my parents weren't very keen about that. They said, 'Get your basic education with a good university like Tulane, first, then you can travel and go some other place for graduate work if you want to. Tulane had a great reputation in those days in the South. It was considered the exclusive school for the best students and it was. It was a big step for me, because I was only about seventeen and even though I had been abroad with my parents and so on, I was still a country boy, grew up in the country, you know. Wasn't very knowledgeable about many things when I got to the big city.

SCHANKE: You had really not spent much time in New Orleans, had you?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, my father took me there and put me in school. Took me over to the bank and introduced me to one of the men in the bank that he knew who, with whom he'd done some business, and he took me to meet several other people in New Orleans, again business friends of his. He took me

DR. DeBAKEY: to the bank to put the money in and get an account for me, open me up an account and to show you how he dealt with me, he opened the bank account for me. I've forgotten what it amounted to, maybe \$500, \$1,000, but I had complete control of that money and would draw upon it as I needed it. He told me this is what you're going to have for this period of time. It was my responsibility. He made it clear to me that I was responsible for the way I spent that money.

SCHANCHE: This was the very first time you were on your own?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, exactly. But he put me on my own and he expected me to be on my own. This, I think, shows the kind of relationship he had with me and in a sense the confidence he had in me.

SCHANCHE: Did you have an temptation at all to use it irresponsibly?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, many....oh, many times....because this was the first time I had been there and, of course, the boys wanted me to.....because I had made friends quickly, and I wanted to see the fights and that sort of thing.

SCHANCHE: It was a very exciting time.

DR. DeBAKEY: It was a very exciting time for me. You know, New Orleans

DR. DeBAKEY: was gambling and everything else, prostitution and of course, many of the boys that came there wanted to.... also came from the country, there were some from New Orleans who knew the ropes, they led us around, and I had to quickly realize that I was there to do well and of course, I just couldn't think of the possibility of failing, that would be the end of my life. That was my attitude. So , I had to study pretty hard. Then secondly, I got into a lot tougher competition when I got to college. The competition in high school never was very great, I'd say in the sense that I didn't have.... I had competed, but I was always able to compete successfully. When I got to college I ran into a lot of pretty bright chaps. I remember the first quarter, or semester, or whatever it was, it was tri-semester, I've forgotten, I had math and I think it was calculus, but I'm not sure and we had a pretty hard math teacher. A young fellow, very bright and my final grade came back 80. I had never made less than 100 in math and I was just shocked at this 80. So, I went to see him and I wanted to know where, you know, what did I miss

DR. DeBAKEY: and so on, I thought I'd gotten them all. I had answered all the questions correctly. 'The first thing,' he said to me, he said, 'Young man, I want to tell you something, there's no question about the fact that you did better, far better than any other student in this class, but,' he said, 'there were only seven students in this class that passed,' There were about thirty of us in the class, and he said, 'You made the highest grade.' And I said, "Well, that....I'm glad to know that I passed," but I mean, I was very nice about it, I wasn't going to argue with him, but on the other hand, I did point out to him that I still would like to know where I had failed, and what did I fail in. So he pulled out the papers and showed me. I was shocked that I had made these mistakes, I mean, as soon as he showed me I realized it, very quickly, you know. God, how did I do this? I was terribly upset to have to tell my parents I made 80 in math.

SCHANKE: Did no good to tell them that everyone else was lower than 80?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I told them that, but that didn't do any good at all. They said well.....

SCHANKE: This was on your final exam, or your final course for the semester?

DR. DeBAKEY: This was the final course grade, oh, yes, for the semester. It was just before Christmas and I had to go back home. I got all these grades at Christmas time. I went back home for the Christmas holidays. Well, I really,...it shook me up, shook me up so badly that I realized that I couldn't do all of these things that I wanted to do; going out with the boys at night and so on, even though I was studying in the morning. So, I began to sort of change my lifestyle. I began to go out for other things, like going out for the band, and playing sports area, and really only going out one night a week, Saturday night, that's the only night I went out.

SCHANKE: You told me that you were already inwell, in the habit of not sleeping a whole lot.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, oh, yes, I'd get up early in the morning.

SCHANKE: You had more time to think than most people.....

DR. DeBAKEY: That's right, you see, I'd sometimes stay up with them because I lived in the dormitory the first year. After that I moved out of the dormitory, because I told my parents, I said, it may cost a little more, but I can't, I really can't study there, there are too many distractions.

DR. DeBAKEY: And you're too open, you know, students walk in at any hour of the day or the night and want to.....or they'll call you and tell you to come on over to the other end of the hallway, we're having a little party, you know, bring beer in.... It was just too subject to what they wanted to do, so I moved out the next year and stayed in a boarding house nearby where I could control myself a little better. I then was able to study well and, you see, I'd study early in the morning, I'd get up at five and study for a couple of hours before I went to class, have breakfast and then go on to class. This, I think, this is a great advantage because you know, you're fresh from your books and your studying and your notes and you go to class and you are fresh. It's right there in your mind. So, I had a great experience in college and I had a good relationship with my teachers, as I say, and I don't mean by that I was a teacher's pet, but they saw that I was trying to do good work and this always catches the eye of a teacher who is interested in his students and for, example, my English teacher, I still correspond with him, and am very fond of him.

SCHANKE: What's his name?

DR. DeBAKEY: Mike.....if you hadn't asked me that I'd.....

SCHANKE: It's not important.

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I'll get it. McKutchen!

SCHANKE: McKutchen.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, and he taught my brother, he taught my wife, she took a course under him and he was a Scotchman, a typical Scotchman. But very, very nice man and I was very fond of him. And even though I was not majoring in English, the courses I took under him, you see, he liked what I did, he tried to encourage me. He told me one time, he said, 'You know, I wish you weren't interested in science,' he said, 'you really ought to go into English literature.'

SCHANKE: Go in to literature?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, English literature.

SCHANKE: As an academic or as a writer?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I think, he encouraged me to do this both as a writer and as one interested in English literature. I did a number of papers that he suggested I do....analysis....

SCHANKE: Critical analysis?

DR. DeBAKEY: Critical analysis and some other things.

DR. DeBAKEY: And I used to have all this, I wish I could tell now where I put these papers, because he made some very nice remarks on them, and I kept them. He said, "You have a way of writing and understanding that I like very much and" he said, "I think you have a talent for it and I think you ought to go into it."

SCHANKE: Well, your medical papers are far better than the average doctor would write.....

DR. DeBAKEY: So, I like to fool around with them and when I have time, when I'm not pressed to write. As I say, you see, this relationship, this sort of thing was very satisfying in my education; to get this kind of good relationship with your teachers. You know, as a comfort I have a very strong feeling of sort of gratitude to teachers in general and even today, all through my professional life in taking care of teachers, I either don't charge them anything, if they pay themselves, I give them professional courtesy, or I charge only what their insurance pays, so that they pay nothing out of pocket for any service I render them. You know, I think teachers are really one of the great segments of our society that contributes so much to the society.

SCHANCHE: Well, I guess their main function is to accelerate what motivation we bring.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yeah, sure and, of course, they can't force you to learn, but they can stimulate you and if you have a desire to learn, they can sure help you.

SCHANCHE: Do you feel that you were particularly fortunate in this respect, that you had stimulating teachers in high school and in college?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes.

SCHANCHE: Because most of us don't, you know, we can remember a few that were particularly stimulating and others who.....

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I think I was especially fortunate, of course, it may well be that I'm reflecting my own reaction to my teachers, but it just seems to me that I was especially fortunate. I can't recall a single teacher that I didn't like. Very much! Now, there were some in medical school that I didn't regard as very stimulating, but I like them and the, even some that had a great reputation for being pretty stern and difficult, I got along well with them. Had a great, you know.....all of the teachers that I came in contact with, I really enjoyed. And those.....some, of course, much more closely than

DR. DeBAKEY: others, some were just for a short period, but each.....

SCHANCHE: It's noon, now, Mike, do you want to.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, then I think we have to stop, because I've got to go over to.....

DR. DeBAKEY: I learned, read about motors, you know, and I learned to work on them, so my brother and I, we had a car, because we would work on it and try to hop it up and you know do things like that. And I got to know a lot about motors and I was very interested in them. When I got to college, the first year I didn't have a car, but when I moved out of the dormitory, my father bought me an automobile. I was always trying to get a little more horsepower out of it and would work on it.

SCHANCHE: Did you have to have a driver's license in those days?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, you didn't have to get a state driver's license.

SCHANCHE: I don't guess they started wide spread licensing until the '20's.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes. No, when I was thirteen, I didn't have a driver's license. They weren't very....you know, a small town like that.

SCHANCHE: I don't think most states started licensing until the mid to late twenties, didn't they?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, that's right. But, I kept my interest in automobiles after that.

SCHANCHE: You've never engaged in it as a sport though, have you?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, but we used to do a little racing on the side, sort of amateur racing, my brother and I would go out in the country to a little small track with the cars that we'd fix up.

SCHANCHE: Stock car track?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. Yeah, it was.....well, it was pretty amateurish in those days. Wasn't like it is now....we'd race each other...

SCHANCHE: It must be frustrating to drive a car like this in traffic.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, it wants to go.....

SCHANCHE: This is what you want to get out and open up on the highway.

DR. DeBAKEY: That's right. It's not a.....it certainly gulps gasoline.

SCHANCHE: It does?

DR. DeBAKEY: That's because you've got to drive in first or second gear all the time, you can hardly get out of second gear.

SCHANCHE: There's an anecdote that's told about you. Your one accident was quite deliberately bashing in a student's car who was in your parking place. Is that a true story?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. No, that's not a true story. You know, there are all

DR. DeBAKEY: kinds of stories that people get around.

SCHANCHE: I know, and they get magnified.

DR. DeBAKEY: Not only that, but once they get told, you know, they are enhanced....well, you've seen me in the operating room, I'm not going to hit anybody, you know. And yet there are stories told about my hitting people and throwing instruments around, it's absolutely not true. I don't do anything like that, and I never did. Now, I do make some very, perhaps caustic remarks.....

SCHANCHE: Very cutting, yeah.....

DR. DeBAKEY: But they are not, and I can raise hell, when someone doesn't do the right thing, but I don't hit anybody. It's just not in my basic nature to do this, not that I'm.....

SCHANCHE: Danny Kaye said the other day, when he was getting dressed, when you came up to his room there, that the reason he doesn't ever want to direct a show or movie or anything is because he finds it impossible to try to get the best out of people who simply aren't as good as he is.

DR. DeBAKEY: This is really frustrating you know, this is one of the greatest difficulties you have in dealing with any group of people. Of course, the most frustrating thing I have to

DR. DeBAKEY: deal with are my personnel. You know, I am constantly calling their attention to things that they ought to do..... there's no need for me to call their attention to them. You see, and this involves every thing, not only the work that I do in the operating room, but all those different people that are in the team; the pump team, I've got to wake them up from time to time; the anesthetist, constantly waking him up to watch the pressure and watch this....you know, call their attention to things that they ought to be watching. In my office, I've got to call the girls down about things that, they are routine things, you know----constantly! And my associates, we saw rounds yesterday, two of the patients had been taken off of the pre-operative list, well, this is a routine thing, they shouldn't have....I shouldn't have to call their attention to that. Shouldn't have been on there. I mean, this is daily, daily. It's the most frustrating thing you have to put up with. Just, you know, the inability of people to do the things you know they should be doing and that you have to constantly be calling them down. So in directing the surgery,

DR. DeBAKEY: you have this problem of many people who just don't have the capability. It just isn't fair, of being able to meet their requirements on their job. And yet you've got to deal with them. You can't do the job alone. You've got to have them there.

SCHANKE: How often does one come through who you find has your degree of concentration and.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Very, very rarely. Very rarely.... But you find them that come through that have....you see, all of the surgeons that are associated with me have been there, they are all trained by me, and I have kept them because they have certain qualities and I....they don't have all the ideal qualities, you know, they don't have all the capabilities you'd like to see, but they have the most....a great majority of them. They are very good technically, good judgement, they have good knowledge, they are pretty good teachers; they are just not superb in all respects. Take Dr. Noon, for example, he is an extraordinarily able young man. Superior in every way, since he was a student, I picked him up as a student, he was a top notch student.

DR. DeBAKEY: He was a leader of his class, dedicated. Very hard worker. Has the desire to constantly improve himself, to do superior work, devoted to his work, give the time; and Dr. Daniell has some of these qualities, but not as well, not as good, he's no where near as good, never will be. Now, I can spot them almost immediately. There are many ways you can spot them. So many of them have certain average qualities that I just call them mediocre. Just mediocre. Most people are mediocre. That's the whole definition of mediocre. It's very difficult for me to put up with mediocrity. Most difficult thing I have to deal with is to put up with mediocrity.

SCHANKE: But you've had to do it for so many years.....

DR. DeBAKEY: I still can't.....get adjusted to it.....,

SCHANKE: So often, it must be repetitive because you teach, you bring people along and constantly repeating the same lessons to...

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, I know, philosophically, that there is nothing I can do about it, and yet, I can't basically accept it, it's difficult for me to understand, and what happens is that I'm turned off to these people, I don't want to associate with them. I don't want to teach them, I don't do anything to them.

DR. DeBAKEY: I just want to leave them alone, just not worth fooling with. And, of course, this affects my personality in my relations with other people and it's part of the criticisms that I have to put up with, because a great majority of the people don't find me, you know, very warm and very....they don't have a good relation with me....it's because I'm turned off to them, I don't want to have a relationship with them and I'm not willing to be a good guy, you see, I can't pay that price. Some people do, but I just am unwilling to do it.

SCHANKE: Well, it appears to me that you are a perfectly relaxed and charming and a good guy outside of the professional environment, that you're.....a very, very demanding in that environment.

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, in that environment, you're dealing with the life and death of people. The necessity to meet all of the standards becomes critical in many of the patients....particularly the patients that I have to deal with, who are physically ill. So that when they don't meet those standards in that relation, I'm upset about it. And I say to them very often, don't

DR. DeBAKEY: you see all you're doing is getting me upset and this creates a bad relationship because you're not paying attention to your job. What you're supposed to do, and I've given you instructions about this time and time again. I say to you now do this, do that, do you understand the reason for it, tell me you do and yet you don't do it. I have to come up here and check you constantly. I have no confidence in your ability to do what I tell you to do. That's why I'm constantly checking you and finding these deficiencies. I can't help insisting upon these standards in that environment because I know how important it is to the life of the patient, and I have had many experiences in which the patient died because.....

SCHANKE: Someone was careless?.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Someone was careless, time and time again. How do you explain that, how can you explain that to the family, I'm going to go out and talk to the family, you can't tell them that somebody was careless, you can't go out and tell them somebody wasn't paying attention to what they were doing. We had a death not long ago in which the patient died because the anesthesia people weren't paying any attention to what they

DR. DeBAKEY: were doing. You do the job technically perfect, and yet they kill him, what happens.

SCHANKE: What was Dr. Ochsner as a professor, was his, I'm sure his method was not the same as yours.

DR. DeBAKEY: No, but he was demanding. He had high standards. He taught me all those aspects of it and he inspired me because of the high standards that he set for himself. He lived by, and I admired that. I was inspired by what he, by his teachings. He was a great influence on me. He also was a wonderful person. Dedicated, devoted person. Highly..... You know, it really touched me very deeply, then for Christmas, he and his wife, gave me a check for \$500.00 for the DeBakey Medical Foundation.

SCHANKE: Well, he's been quite successful I gather in a fairly short time in his business.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Very successful.....When he says he's greedy, something's wrong. He isn't really a very greedy boy, he's....in that light, he does as good.....he's very ambitious.

SCHANKE: He looks like he's ambitious and hard working.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh. Very hard working. You see, he went down there after

DR. DeBAKEY: he married this beautiful girl in Lima who is the daughter of one of the biggest families down there. A lovely girl, very intelligent, speaks four languages.

SCHANKE: Mrs. DeBakey told me about that.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, and well, he went down there because he had an opportunity when he got his bachelors degree in international business to select a number of places to go with international firms. He selected that because Texaco had offered him a job at its biggest, really, its whole South American operations center is in Lima. And he rose within two years to be the second man in the organization.

SCHANKE: In charge of the whole South American....

DR. DeBAKEY: And the man who was at the top there, top man was offered a job within a year or so to return to the New York office and they offered him the job of being in charge of the whole South American operation, and he turned them down and got out. He set up his own business. He said to me when he had this opportunity, he said, "Dad, I know it's a great opportunity to go up the ladder with the Texaco Company, I've got to make up my mind, am I going to stay and become, you know, an organization man or am I going

DR. DeBAKEY: to do something else." And he said, "I just, right now can't visualize myself being purely an organization man, I want a certain amount of independence, and I think I have an opportunity to go into business for myself." Even when he was working for them, he was doing some consultations on the outside, and he saw an opportunity to go into business for himself, his father-in-law, who just died several months ago, was in business there, had a big business, and wanted him to come in with him and run the business in time because he didn't have so much confidence in his boy, his son, doing it, his son is kind of a playboy. A nice boy, but a playboy. And he saw quickly in Mickey a really very hard worker.

SCHANKE: Yeah, very dynamic.

DR. DeBAKEY: Mickey refused to do it. He said I....

SCHANKE: He wanted to do his own....

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, wanted to go out on his own...and he's been extremely successful and has built one of his companies now, the Recepteur Company, which is a travel company, into I think the first year it had something like \$25,000 to \$30,000

DR. DeBAKEY: in total sales for this year, in less than two years, he's built it to total sales of over a million dollars.

SCHANCHE: Boy! That's quite a record and he's opening a branch here now, and he's got branches all over the world.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, he's opening a branch here now and this is what he wants his brother to do. He made a very good offer to his brother, giving him not only a certain number of shares in the company, but an option ultimately to own half the company, you know, to go in fifty-fifty with him. So, he's very considerate of his brothers, in fact, he offered one of the other boys, another brother, an opportunity to work with him, too. He said you can expand it, and you can work and build this into something very big and he said I can't do it myself, I need some more help.

SCHANCHE: Were you disappointed that none of them went into medicine?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. No, I really was.....

SCHANCHE: You made no effort to lead them that way?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. I gave them opportunities. They worked in the hospital and had a chance to see what it was like, but I didn't.....it doesn't, you know, I'm not a....I don't find

DR. DeBAKEY: that sort of thing necessary to my own gratification. I love them and admire them, that they're doing the right thing. It pleases me, that they have grown up to be good citizens, honest, they've all.....the three that are married have done extremely well in their marriages, have married awfully fine girls, all three of them, really lovely girls, very intelligent girls. Girls with good basic character.

SCHANKE: Was your feeling if they wanted medicine they would go for it on their own and.....

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, I think they'd do it on their own. If they wanted it.... they had an opportunity to do what they wanted to do. As a matter of fact, Mickey was really seriously thinking of going into journalism and went so far as....I called one of the professors at La Howe and one at Missouri that I know. Good friends of mine and to ask them about the possibility of seeing....if he could see them, you know, use some influence of getting him into school, journalism.

SCHANKE: Well, he probably would have made a damn good journalist.

DR. DeBAKEY: He has a flair for writing, too. He writes beautiful

DR. DeBAKEY: letters, very chatty, very interesting and....a nice style of writing.....when he was in college at Sewanee, University of the South in Sewanee, he did some writing that, for the college magazine, and he had two of them accepted, they paid him for it. He did one satirical piece and he said, "Dad, you know, I did it just for the fun of it and I didn't know it was going to be accepted, but it was accepted and published and it was about the political groups on campus at Sewanee. And he was kind of poking fun a little bit at both of them, the right and the left, and you know, what they were doing, the similarity of what they were doing, and he said, "I thought it was funny,"and he said, " You know, it's a funny thing, those people don't have any sense of humor.

END OF SIDE TWO.